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It is deeply disappointing that The New York Times printed a story [**"Turkish Aggression is NATO's 'Elephant in the Room'"**] that contains unfounded accusations and far-fetched claims against my country. For nearly seven decades, Turkey has been a force for the good around the world. In this context, much different than some, Turkey assumes its fair share for advancing the Alliance's mission through tangible action, not mere speeches. A few unnamed sources claiming the opposite cannot negate the facts at hand.

The story suggests that Turkey has thwarted the proper functioning of the Alliance and blocked partnerships within NATO. Yet, Turkey takes necessary steps to uphold and defend NATO's priorities and works hand in hand with her Allies to safeguard the Alliance's solidarity and integrity. We have been actively involved in and/or contribute to all NATO operations, in order to protect our common values as well as ensuring the security of the trans-Atlantic region. It is no secret, however, that many times, we have been left alone in our struggle to defend NATO's borders and prevent human sufferings.

In Syria, for example, just a few months ago, regime forces were on the verge of launching a full-scale attack on 3 million civilians, who escaped from the atrocities of Assad and found refuge in Idlib. As President Trump emphasized, if it weren't for Turkey's intervention, tens of thousands of innocent and unarmed people of all ages would have been brutally killed with barrel bombs, rockets and even chemical weapons, while millions would have fled to Turkey and Europe.

The story presents a bright picture of the PKK/YPG terrorist organization, but does not mention that these terrorists fought alongside regime forces, gave critical support to the atrocious capture of Aleppo. Nor does it mention that PKK/YPG fired more than 1,300 rockets and mortars across the border into Turkish city centers, killing 22 civilians and wounding over 200. Hundreds of civilians have been killed in ongoing PKK/YPG IED attacks in

opposition-controlled cities of Syria, while they continue to release hundreds of DAESH members, in return for money.

That is why a recent U.S. Treasury Department waiver for an oil deal between the PKK/YPG and an obscure American energy firm is so alarming. This constitutes nothing less than the financing of terrorism. With this waiver, the U.S. Government will be actively supporting the provision of material support to PKK/YPG by letting this terrorist organization to grasp part of the national resources that belongs to the entire Syrian people.

On the other hand, when Libya's internationally-recognized government asked for military support from Allies, including the U.S., to defend Libya's sovereignty and territorial integrity, as well as to protect its civilians from a war-criminal's aggression, Turkey was the only country to provide concrete help. Protecting Libya from turning into yet another hot spot of instability and humanitarian sufferings in the Mediterranean region, remains the right thing to do. Our goal is to end an unnecessary war that puts the stability of NATO's southern flank at grave risk. Unfortunately, to our dismay, some Allies continue to undertake steps that pave the way to just the opposite.

The story also names Turkey's endeavor to defend her legitimate rights in the Eastern Mediterranean "aggressive" and therefore constitutes a total fallacy. Disregarding the fact that Turkey who has more than 1110 miles long coastline in the Mediterranean Sea has repeatedly extended calls for dialogue at various levels, even in the face of maximalist claims and unilateral actions by third parties, is nothing but misrepresentation. Turkey is determined to defend her interests within the scope of international law, as well as the interests of the Turkish Cypriots.

So, what does this all add up to? Turkey is the backbone of NATO's efforts to face the unprecedented challenges of our new era and will continue to stand guard at the frontlines to confront future threats to our collective security.

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